

INTEGRATED EDUCATION SYSTEM: CALL OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the paper is to discuss the current education system, its shortcomings, the possibility of an Integrated Education System globally, the pros and cons of the latter.

It is a known saying that if you want to change the world, change the Education System. The parameter evaluating a student's performance, a system that provides equal opportunities to the students of a country i.e., its future is a reflection of the current education system. A considerable change in the future of a society can be brought by bringing a change in what is taught to the students today, because students of today are leaders of tomorrow. A person reflects and works on the grounds of his beliefs, attitude and ethics and all of this is a product of how and what is taught to him.

Most of the countries today are striving to bring about Economic Integration, so that countries come together from all over the globe and pool the limited resources to make the most and the best out of it, effectively and efficiently, and thereby lead to market expansion, technology sharing and cross-border investment. But have we considered the most basic thing which sows the seeds of change and development- mentally, socially, economically? The Education System! Why not bring about an integrated education system all over the globe that has the same standards of each country to study the subjects of their choice from the universities that specialize in that particular area, a system that not only caters to theoretical education, but also develops a curiosity in students to be a better themselves, to look at things differently, a system that improves the cognitive abilities of minds, a system that motivates and excites students to study, to research, to find new ways, a system where the students do not feel burdened to score good marks just to keep up with their peers, but the one where they are taught in a way that provides them with practical knowledge, a system that does not make schools feel like prison?

School is where changes begin, but school is where the most changes are required in the current scenario.

PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

School is a universal experience that can both, set you free and oppress. While some students enjoy this journey, some hate it and many people keep fighting for the right to access it. “Many highly-talented, brilliant, creative people think they’re not — because the thing they were good at school wasn’t valued, or was stigmatized.” —Sir Ken Robinson’s famed TED Talk on How Schools Kill Creativity.

Schools these days revolves around a specific set of subjects in a monotonous way, where bells decide when to move, eat, and pee, all the while making their way through standardized tests and rote-learning textbooks. Fortunately, there are alternatives available to the conventional system available, like creative arts schools and alternative education models.

Finland Setting Example: Finland has been rated as the best Education System according to Universitas 21 Ranking 2018. It is characterized by the ability to change a student’s identity. The Finnish students spend very little time in schools and most of their day revolves around extra-curricular activities. The Finnish strongly believe that the best place to learn is outside the classrooms. The system does not encourage cramming or standardized tests, rather adopts common-sense practice, holistic teaching environment, strives for equity over excellence and puts great emphasis on basics. One of the best features that stands out of all is the belief that “Real winners do not compete.” and hence following cooperation instead of competition. This can be seen in the statistics of suicide committed per year i.e. 200 approximately (age20-39 years) in 2018, as per Statista 2020.

While there are some countries like Finland and South Korea, but the dominant form of social conditioning of young people around the globe is through the standard school-based education of siloed learning in age-based groups. The word school creates an image of all chairs pointing towards a blackboard and instructor telling how to do something. In general, schools today

discourage the thinking that is not predefined and approved thus acting as the slaughterhouse of the mind.

It is certainly not the case that there have been no improvements in the education system, but the argument is to discuss the providing literacy to young people from all walks of life, and an equal opportunity to thrive. The argument revolves around the normalization of schools and their enforcement. The way the schooling system is designed and enacted, suffocates the possibility of many people to access it and even leads many others to opt-out of it.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

The WHO Global Health Estimate, 2016 states the number of suicides per year in young people (10-29 yrs) to be equal to 222,093. As shocking as the figure is, it cannot be denied that the number is only increasing with each passing year. The fear of being left out, not scoring good, failure along with extremely high expectations, peer and parental pressure, unavailability of emotional support and the desire to be the best are some of the most common reasons for such an alarming rate of suicides. While there may be other reasons adding to the burden, the Education System is one of the major contributors. Our Education System has made us the victim of rat race since childhood. Students are expected to score good marks, perform better than their peers, have a well-settled life at a certain age, and fulfil all the expectations- of teachers, parents, themselves. Competition is not bad, until it is too excessive that mental health gets compromised, thus leading them to take extreme steps.

The limitations of the current education system also include:

- High rate of dropout, school failure and youth unemployment,
- Excessive focus on theoretical knowledge which sets the mindset of students to mug up concepts instead of understanding it,
- Criticizing errors and mistakes rather than taking advantage of the opportunity to grow and learn from it,
- The lack of more focus on practical education,
- Rigid approach to building knowledge, enforcing conformity and dulling curiosity.

These shortcomings are not new and in fact can be tracked from the history of education for the past few thousand years, the pillars of which were to reinforce hierarchy, obedience and status.

“I never let school get in the way of my education.”- Mark Twain

Learning and Schooling are two different phenomena. The lessons for life are not generally focussed on in schools like Taxation system, because irrespective of the profession or business, a person is going to end up paying taxes and hence at least some basic knowledge should be inculcated in the curriculums.

GLOBALLY INTEGRATED EDUCATION SYSTEM

Countries worldwide are constantly striving to bring improvements in all possible ways to the Education System. This can be cited from the Indian Education Policy, which has been modified after nearly 30 years in July 2020. The policy has suggested some considerable changes in the system like focussing more on vocational studies, encouraging bag-less days, experiential learning at all stages, etc. While all the countries attempt to make amends in the policies with the best intentions, there lays a long way to go.

A globally integrated education system should be considered wherein the following can be adopted:

- Alike standards of measuring the performance,
- Similar length of courses,
- Scope of learning various languages,
- Emphasis on vocational courses,
- Knowledge of basic practical subjects that are useful for everyone irrespective of background,
- Co-operation over Coordination,
- Extra-curricular activities,
- Introduction to customs and languages of different countries,
- Transferrable Skills,
- Diversity Training,

- Emphasis on Practical over theory,
- No compromise in understanding of basics.

There is infinite scope of development in this field and should be taken into consideration to not just improve the system today, but also the future of the world at large. One way can be to analyze different education systems prevalent around the world, figuring out the best features that have brought good results to the respective systems and then putting these together for the best outcome.

Taking an example from the current scenario, the duration of most of the graduation courses in India is three years, whereas the required duration for graduation in maximum universities abroad is four years. In such circumstances, the students who wish to pursue their masters from abroad have to compromise. Also, some universities use a 4.0 scale GPA system of grading, while others may use a 10.0 scale or even a percentage system.

Issues like these may not sound alarming, but they can prove to have catastrophic effects on the mental state of students and need to be catered to. Additionally, most of the countries strive to be an active part of the global village for trade and commerce, then why not make the education system i.e the first step to any change such that future becomes prosperous too. With the knowledge of different customs, beliefs and languages of various countries, not only will the trade across countries be positively impacted but also personal relations among people different backgrounds altogether.

OPPORTUNITIES IN ADOPTING A GLOBAL INTEGRATED EDUCATION SYSTEM

The idea of a globally integrated system is on the radar to bring about a global balance by putting the pieces together. Adopting such a system is expected to bring advantages in diverse forms. For example, students will be well-versed in different fields, it will open a plethora of opportunities for students to gain experience both in work and personal terms at international level, a greater level of contentment and lesser stress, honing different skills, getting acquainted with people from diverse backgrounds, etc. This change will bring incredible experience for all students, teachers, and the world as a whole.

“Science may have transformed the world into a global village, but it has yet to teach the villagers to learn to talk with and understand each other.” — Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*

Marshall McLuhan says, “There are no passengers to spaceship earth. We are all crew.” But do we act as a crew? To be a part of a crew, we should be able to understand each other in terms of language, beliefs and emotions. The suggested education system fulfils the objective and works as a stepping stone towards a Global Village.

Additionally, the focus on integrated education will develop students into better human beings and contribute to their personalities and their experience of life. This will give them a deeper look into the meaning of life and pave their way to happiness and harmony.

OBSTACLES IN ADOPTING A GLOBAL INTEGRATED EDUCATION SYSTEM

“If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn’t lead anywhere.” –Frank A. Clark

There are always two sides of the coin. Every positive has a negative, every rose has thorns, and every force has a counterforce. The case of adopting a Global Integrated Education System also does not come without some limitations like:

- Strong opinion against some beliefs and practices of others,
- Difficulty returning home,
- Culture Shock,
- Difficulty fitting in,
- Implementation will be expensive,
- Time-consuming process to come up with such a policy.

Schools offer a variety of courses for individuals, but have they not forgotten one thing? To help them develop as a person! Students have been bifurcated based on streams like science, arts and mathematics. They have become a slave of specialized subjects and are seen and judged based on the same rather than their nature and personality. Consequently, they hardly understand the meaning of life and are left hanging between the gap of learning and life.

The presence of shortcomings does not imply the need to stop rather provides a reason to work and think harder and overcome it. The best way to learn is to learn from experiences. The adopting of a globally integrated system is not going to serve as a panacea for all the problems in the current education system, but is expected to provide more and better opportunities to students at all personal, school and professional levels. It is expected to bring the whole world closer.

CONCLUSION

“During the decades after *Brown v. Board of Education* there was a terrific progress. Tens of thousands of public schools were integrated racially. During that time the gap between Black and White achievement narrowed.”- Jonathon Kozol. Education plays an active role in bridging the gap among cultures, traditions and people. For cultures to become integrated, they must know, understand and respect each other. Therefore, integrated education does not imply giving up one’s characteristics. The objective of integrated education is to view a student as a whole person. The goal should not be just to help a student find a good job and settle, but to be a complete and a happy human being. Integrated Education emphasizes on the overall development of individuals in terms of body, emotion and spirit. It does not focus merely on providing education, but also helping individuals to hone their skills and use the knowledge to the best of their abilities.

Whitehead’s philosophy “urges us to turn from reductionism and, instead, to think of the whole in relation to the parts and the parts in relation to the whole. A student viewed from a process perspective is a student viewed holistically. Teachers do not confront a mind, or a body, or cognition, or affect, but, a totality; learners bring their whole being to the situation.”

The need for integrated education arises because we live in a global village. We are now a part of world civilization. Therefore, communication and contact among people from different parts of the world have become much more important than ever before. Our schools should teach our children to know, understand and appreciate other cultures and each other.

Prof. Dwight Allen said: “Unfortunately, in our schools children are more likely to be learning about a world that no longer exists. Knowledge is power; ignorance is oppression. We are oppressed if we don’t know, understand, and appreciate our neighbours around the world. We

need this knowledge to understand why they act the way they do, what they believe in, and what they consider to be important.” Merely understand different cultures might not help, so what we need is to teach the children to celebrate diversity.

Different countries have different education systems which cater to the needs of a specific country or culture, but are these enough for today’s global needs? The global society of today need a new education system that helps students to inculcate not just knowledge, but harmony; not just mathematics and science, but learn to be good human beings too for a better tomorrow.

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